

WEEKEND ESCAPE | SAN DIEGO

HAYNE PALMOUR IV San Diego Union-Tribune

VISITORS ARE WELCOME to have a seat in this boat sculpture by Jonathan Allen in Liberty Station in San Diego.

Ship's come in

Navy recruits at Liberty Station give way to artists and amblers

By IRENE LECHOWITZKY >>> All hands on deck! Liberty Station, a 1920s naval training facility in San Diego, has been repurposed as a mixed-use development. It's still used for training, but marching Navy recruits have been replaced by girls in tutus doing pirouettes. Converted barracks host dance and art classes as well as galleries, shops and small museums. Awash with history, the Spanish Revival architecture, covered walkways and plazas are a delight to stroll through (2640 Historic Decatur Road, www.libertystation.com). My husband and I popped into a watercolor exhibit, watched a flamenco dance class work on a difficult sequence and listened to a docent explain an elaborate textile piece. Best of all, the Navy commissary that served chipped beef on toast has been replaced by the Liberty Public Market, a foodie's food hall with multiple vendors. The tab: We spent \$189 plus tax for a night at the Courtyard by Marriott and about \$120 for food.

The bed

The Courtyard San Diego Airport/Liberty Station (2592 Laning Road; [619] 221-1900, www.lat.ms/libertystationhotel), adjacent to a large park with waterfront views of downtown, is an easy walk to everything in Liberty Station and offers a free shuttle to the nearby airport. The recently renovated rooms have enough style to overcome the feel of a standard business hotel; amenities include free Wi-Fi, mini-fridge, Keurig coffee maker and a 40-inch flat-screen TV. There is a rather dark lobby, a bar, a patio with rattan furniture, and a small pool. Families might want to choose the Homewood Suites by Hilton (2576 Laning Road; [619] 222-0500, www.lat.ms/libertystationhomewood) next door, which offers daily complimentary breakfast and other extras.

The meal

We grazed our way through Liberty Public Market (2820 Historic Decatur Road; [619] 487-9346, www.libertypublicmarket.com), sampling goodies from its food artisans and chefs. There are butchers, bakers and olive oil makers as well as a roster of kitchen wizards knocking out ceviche, jambalaya, poke, lobster rolls and more. My top picks from a weekend's worth of indulgence included the bratwurst sandwich with onions, peppers and bacon crumbles at Mastiff Sausage Co. (www.mastiffsausagecompany.com); the seasoned chicken and beef empanadas at Parana Empanadas Argentinas (www.paranaempanadas.com); and the ice cream at Scooped (www.scoopedsd.com), an outpost of the beloved MooTime Creamery at the Hotel del Coronado, which was great albeit a bit pricey.

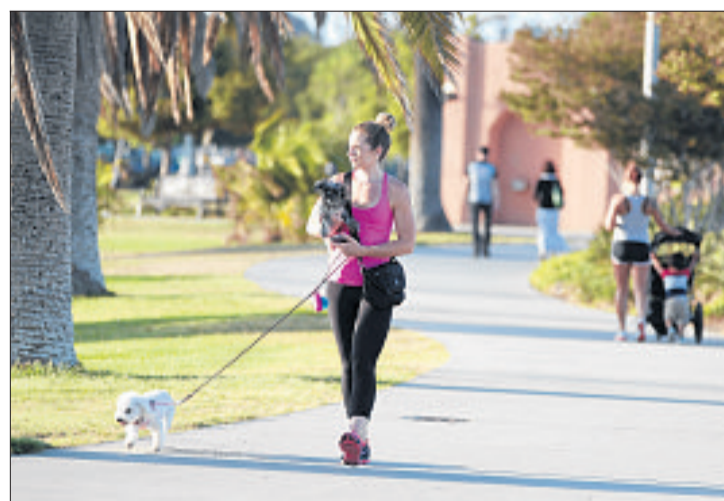
The find

A visit to the New Americans Museum (2825 Dewey Road, Suite 102; [619] 756-7707, www.newamericansmuseum.org) should be mandatory for presidential candidates, especially in this year's contest. This tiny museum in Liberty Station celebrates the immigrants who have, to coin a phrase, made America great. Nearby, the San Diego Comic Art Gallery (2765 Truxtun Road, Liberty Station, Barracks 3; [858] 270-1315, Ext. 2138, www.sdcomicartgallery.com) features original art and often has working artists on the premises. We were lucky enough to catch an autograph session with Kevin Eastman, co-creator of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and the event felt like a mini-slice of Comic-Con.



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LIBERTY PUBLIC MARKET, with food artisans and chefs, is a place to indulge.



HAYNE PALMOUR IV San Diego Union-Tribune

WALKWAYS AND PLAZAS at Liberty Station in San Diego make walking — or carrying — the dogs convenient and scenic.



HAYNE PALMOUR IV San Diego U-T

VALERIA SARRAF scoops ice cream at Public Market.

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The lesson learned

Timing is everything. I was at Liberty Station for the Summer Block Party. There were complementary bites, bands, art demonstrations, a pop-up yoga class and more. If you come on the first Friday of the month, there's the nighttime Liberty Art Walk with its mix of dance, theater and music performances, open museums and galleries, and opportunities to yak with local artists.

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IRENE LECHOWITZKY

THE NEW AMERICANS MUSEUM at San Diego's Liberty Station celebrates immigrants and their contributions.

NEED TO KNOW

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BOB CALLAHAN

Send us your best vacation pictures

Hitting the road for vacay? Don't forget to pack your favorite picture-taking device for photos for possible inclusion in The Times Travel section's annual summer vacation photo issue, scheduled for Sept. 18. To see the rules, go to www.lat.ms/photoissue.

— TIMES STAFF

Avis' new app

Don't like your rental car? Avis has a new mobile app designed to give customers more control of their experience. (Hertz has a similar app, which it says it continues to improve.) You can choose another vehicle on the spot simply by swiping and selecting another make or model. Those who want to extend or shorten rental agreements can adjust their reservation. Renters can also get road assistance. The app is called Avis Now; it's available for all Avis Preferred members (free to join) by way of the Avis mobile application for devices on the iOS and Android platforms. Info: www.avis.com.

— CHRIS ERSKINE



Caesars Entertainment

Vegas yoga on high

Las Vegas' High Roller Ferris wheel is now hosting daily one-hour yoga sessions with the Strip and the nearby mountains as a backdrop. Participants will don headphones for guidance from a Silent Savasana yoga school instructor. A 60-minute session equals two rotations of the wheel. Sessions must be booked at least 24 hours in advance. They're offered for \$75 a person between 11:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. Sunset classes, for which start times will vary, cost \$85. At least four people are required per class. Private sessions are available for \$250 for one person or \$300 for a couple. Info: www.lat.ms/linq

— JAY JONES

Hotel ratings are out

Customer-satisfaction ratings for North American hotels rose for a fourth straight year, but not as much as in previous years, according to a new J.D. Power study. Rates and fees appear to be a major factor. Satisfaction with cost and fees improved by 25 points between 2014 and 2015, but this year it improved by only 1 point. The study, in its 20th year, measures such services as reservations, check-in performance and food and beverage service. Satisfaction is calculated on a 1,000-point scale. This year's overall rating rose 2 points, to 806. The three most important amenities: free Wi-Fi, breakfast and parking. To see whether your favorite hotel group won a top spot — and one took home honors for the 11th consecutive year — go to www.lat.ms/hotels.

— CHRIS ERSKINE



Drop Stop

Minding the gap

Most cars come with one common curse — the crevice between the seat cushion and the console. They're too narrow for most fingers, but they're plenty wide for keys, credit cards, cash, jewelry, food, pens and just about anything else you don't want to lose. The cure: a neoprene-encased wedge called Drop Stop that squishes into the gap, filling and blocking it. It has a slot at one end that slides snugly over the seat belt catch, anchoring the wedge and allowing it to slide with the seat. The wedges, in basic black and designed to fit most vehicles, come in pairs, one for the driver's seat and one for the passenger's. Drop Stop Seat Gap Fillers cost \$19.99 a pair. Info: www.buydropstop.com.

— JUDI DASH